understood that no less than 4,000 cases, since the passing of the Buildings Act, had been laid before the official referee. Did not that show what a mystified law it was? It was a bar to improved ventilation, and indeed to all improvement."

The following other resolutions were then passed, Messrs. Dawson, Corbett, Hall, Knott, Pascoe, Lee, and Irvine taking part in the proceedings:—

"That the interference of district surveyors in small matters, their fees, the fee of the official referee, are burdensome to the class of small builders, and in the first-mentioned cases ought to be abolished, and in all cases modified."

"That it is desirable to have an appeal from the judgment of the official referee."

"That the Act as a whole is unintelligible, and needs in every clause to be revised by practical men, so as to simplify and shorten its provisions, and to remove from it all objectionable and oppressive restrictions."

A form of petition to the House of Commons, and of memorial to the Woods and Forests, was then determined on.

## FURTHER NOTE ON GAS IN THE PROVINCES.

THE surveying officers held their first meeting at Southampton on Monday week, but the proceedings were merely preliminary. The case of the new or "Southampton Consumers" Gas-light and Coke Company was opened by Mr. Coxwell, who stated that the great deficiency of gas there at present, and the price, were the grounds on which another establishment was requisite. The inquiry was adjourned till next day, as a short-hand writer was necessary, and does not appear to have been present. A director of the South Western Railway offered the services of the electric telegraph, but in so indefinite a way, that when one of the surveying officers thanked the director, and declared that "it would assist them materially," the solicitor of the old company "excited much amusement by reminding the learned gentlemen that the short-hand writers' notes could not be so transmitted." Neither, indeed, could the short-hand writer himself, for that matter; and as to a telegraphic dispatch in quest of him, in all probability an ordinary messenger by rail would have been equally, if not more effective, as an adjournment till next day had been determined on. Complaints of injury to the gas-pipes and lamps by the excavations for the sewers had been made by the old company to the improvement board; and on considering these, the question was started whether there was not in their lease with the company a reserved power to the commissioners to take possession of the gas works altogether, and themselves to manufacture gas; the very practice through which improvements have been so handsomely supported at Manchester. It is strange that the question whether there be such a reservation in the lease of a company whose establishment and supply are held to be so insufficient and unsatisfactory should only be now started, when another remedy for the evil has been proposed, in the establishment of a new company. It was also wondered whether the new company would interfere with that privilege, supposing it does exist. Now is the time, if it be not too late, to consider the advantage of laying hold of such a privilege, for the common good and the improvement of the town, as has been so successfully done at Manchester, the history of whose gas exploits ought to be before the eyes of the community at Southampton and elsewhere at this eventful moment. If we recollect aright, some statistical and other details of this matter will be found in the Parliamentary Gazetteer of England and Wales: which see.——The enormous per centage which the Gas Company at Mansfield are making on their gas and meters is now a subject of general complaint there. The inhabitants are said to be most scandalously treated too. "The taps of the street lamps are frequently not more than half turned on, and the lights are often extinguished altogether by two o'clock on dark nights. Well may larking gentlemen escape the police. But all this will not be much longer endured. If persisted in, the public must and will take a decisive step."——In addition to our note on the *Liverpool Guardian* gas question, last week, we may here observe, that though the further reduction of the price of gas to 3s. 8d. per 1,000 cubic feet, is a prominent feature of the new measure, another feature, no less prominent and interesting to the shareholders at least, if not to the public at large, is the assurance of a profit of 7½ per cent. even on that unprecedently low price; "and this they are prepared to prove can be realized in consequence of the improvements which science has introduced into the manufacture, and by the vast increase of the population and buildings."——The town council of Berwick-on-Tweed, according to the *Berwick Warder*, have been requested by the inhabitants of Spittal to extend the local Act for lighting the streets with gas, to Spittal, which, strange to say, has not been hitherto done, although it contains a population of no less than 2,000, and although a great portion of that population have now the benefit of gas in their houses. It is full time that a community such as this should be put on a par with almost every small town in Scotland as well as England even of 700 inhabitants, much less of 2,000.

## SOCIETY OF ARTS.

JANUARY 27th.—Mr. George Moore, vice-president, in the chair.

The first paper read was by Mr. Irvin, on his "Patent Machinery for the Manufacture of Architectural Carvings," concerning which we spoke long ago. The second communication read was by Mr. Henry Cole, "On the Formation of a National Gallery of the works of British Artists by means of public voluntary contributions." The author proposed, that an exhibition of the works of one living artist should take place in the society's rooms annually; that a graduated charge should be made for admission to view the same; and that, after deducting from the receipts the cost of such exhibition, the remaining fund should be appropriated as a commission to the artist to paint a picture, without restricting him to any particular subject. The picture, when painted, to be presented to the National Gallery, or in some way made the property of the nation, and to be so placed as to be open to the public free for ever. Thus, the author thinks, art might be promoted, and that such commissions would be calculated to obtain from artists pictures which they would feel a pride in shewing to their countrymen as their best works, on which they would rest their fame, and which they would offer to posterity as the best specimens of their genius and ability.

It was stated from the chair, that the proposition had been under the consideration of the council, and arrangements for carrying it out are being made by the Committee of Fine Arts.

Mr. Startin, surgeon to the London Cutaneous Institution, forwarded some remarks "On a Pneumatic Inspirator for the use of Dry Grinders, Divers, Firemen, &c., also on its applicability for the administration of sulphuric or other medicated vapours." The immense destruction of life in that large division of our population, whose occupation produces dust or noxious vapours, the author observed, has attracted the solicitude of physicians for many years past, but no means have hitherto been devised of effectually arresting so great an evil. To give a vivid idea of the nature of this evil, we need but refer to the statistics of mortality among dry grinders of needles or cutlery; by which it appears, that the majority of deaths occur between the ages of twenty-six and thirty. After enumerating the various trades by whom such an instrument might be used with advantage, he proceeded to describe the apparatus, which consists of a thin case of metal, glass, or other substance, 1¼ inches deep, 2¼ inches long, and 3¼ inches in breadth at the base, and is so constructed as to cover the mouth and nostrils, and is retained on the face by an elastic band. This case is provided with two valves, made of vulcanized India-rubber; one is in front of the case, and opens outwards; the other is in the bottom, below the mouth, and opens inwards; a tube is attached to the case, below the latter valve, and opens into the external air, or it may be fixed to a vessel carried in the folds of the dress, and arranged with a tube, having one opening to the air, whilst its lower extremity is immersed in a fluid, which shall absorb or neutralize the noxious particles.

## MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE SOANE COLLECTION.

SIR,—In reference to the leading article in THE BUILDER of January 30th, on the subject of architectural antiquities, in which many judicious remarks and hints are made, I venture to ask a question.

Is the museum of Sir John Soane so irrevocably shut up, in that diminutive fancy den in Lincoln's-Inn-fields, as to be for ever a mere useless toy?

Valuable and most encouraging as this collection might become, as the very nucleus of what the above article advocates, it nevertheless now is, and must remain, in its present confined position, a mere splendid toy, to be gaped at twice a week by "country cousins," and the seekers after gratuitous sights. As to any real value either to professional architects or the lovers of architectural antiquities, and in a more extended and valuable light, as a studio for artists, it is useless; and its costly library is a sealed volume.

But if, Mr. Editor, the will of Sir John Soane is such that the house and collection must remain, like the Siamese twins, inseparable, is it not in the power either of the trustees or of Parliament, so to modify the terms of the bequest as to make it constitute the centre of a collection, and by purchase of adjacent houses, really constitute a museum of "architectural antiquities," worthy the name, and of England,—a fitting and appropriate *vis à-vis* to the museum of the College of Surgeons, and an addition of no mean value to that noble square, and to the grand pile so lately raised by the munificence and good taste of the benchers of Lincoln's Inn?

Your constant reader,

E. W. SMITH.

Bedford, February 2nd, 1847.

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

THIS society held their first *conversazione* at the Shire Hall, Gloucester, on the 25th ult., when the president, Mr. W. Vernon Guise, read an interesting address, which is reported, *in extenso*, in the *Gloucestershire Chronicle*. After inviting the county gentlemen to join their ranks, he said:—

"I would impress upon all the necessity of elevating our pursuit into a *science*, and not permitting it to degenerate into a mere hunt after cabinet curiosities. We must keep in view a higher purpose, if we would aspire to the attainment of such results as, though small, may be no unworthy contribution to the general stock of true antiquarian knowledge. Then, not in vain will these memorials of the past have been strewn around us; and it will be a grateful and ennobling task to trace the history of our county in the numerous relics of bygone ages, scattered over its surface,

'Like dials which the wizard Time
Hath rais'd to count his ages by.'"

A communication from Mr. Purnell B. Purnell, on Roman antiquities discovered at Stancombe Park, was read. In 1819 walls were found there of a small Roman villa, varying in height from one to two feet. Plaster still remained on them about one inch and a half thick. "The material of this was coarse and strong, faced with a coating of about one-eighth of an inch thick, very hard and smooth, and this was painted in fresco. It is known that the Romans used pounded marble for this coat, and painted it while the wall was damp; the paint and wall drying together, the former was not subsequently liable to be rubbed off. The paint on these walls was a striped border, colours, crimson, pink, and green, severally, to different rooms. There was no tessellated pavement. Forest of Dean paving stone had been used in some rooms, and floors of cement in others: there might be about six rooms. Neither Roman brick nor tiles were found, nor any apparatus for heating the rooms."

The excavation now going on covers six acres. The walls of thirty-two rooms are exposed, in five of which are the remains of tessellated pavements. The building was destroyed by fire, the tessellated pavement, with the exception of that in five rooms, removed, and nothing of any value left. The walls are in some places as they fell,—the timbers burnt to charcoal, and the tiles broken.

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